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FOREWORD

A major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate inservice growth and school improvement. Consequently, requirements include not only meeting the standards of the Utah State Office of Education, but also completing a school evaluation every six years.

School evaluation is that effort by the local school staff to take a comprehensive look at the school's program, operation, and effect. The school determines how closely its purposes and philosophy coincide with its actual practices and the degree to which its stated objectives are being reached. It is a three-phased program: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, March 26 and 27, 2003, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to meet the requirements referred to above.

The entire staff of Helper Junior High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Tom Montoya is commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for the generally fine program being provided for Helper Junior High School students, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more adequately meet the needs of the students of Helper Junior High School.

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Thomas Roush.....	Director Special

HELPER JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Tom Montoya..... Principal

Counseling

Janet Sparks..... Counselor

Support Staff

Mary Ann Brown	J. Branson	SS. Greenwood
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Faculty

Carol Barnes	Phillip Howa
Michael Bradshaw	Allen Hughes
Lea Cotter	Julie Jorgensen
John DeSandre	Rosemary McCandless
Emily Gibbon	Marie Mortensen
Levan Hall	Mika Salas
Jamie Howa	Janet Sparks

HELPER JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Helper Junior High School is to prepare students to meet the challenges of their developmental stages through the teaching of intellectual, technological, physical, and social skills in partnership with families, other students, teachers, and the community.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

Helper Junior High is committed to providing many and various opportunities for personal growth. This commitment is based on the following beliefs:

- Everyone is entitled to be treated with respect.
- Everyone has the ability to learn and progress.
- High standards foster high achievement.
- Everyone is a valuable individual with potential.
- Every individual is accountable for his or her own actions.
- Learning is a life-long process.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Gwen Callahan, Emery High School, Emery School District,
Visiting Team Chairperson

Karen Bishop, San Rafael Junior High School, Emery School District

Diane Butler, San Rafael Junior High School, Emery School District

Betsy Cazier, Sorenson's Ranch School

Kent Larson, Ephraim Middle School, South Sanpete School District

Lisa Taylor, Roosevelt Junior High School, Dushesne School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

HELPER JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Helper Junior High School is one of two junior high schools in Carbon School District. Helper is located in the central part of the state in an area of historic mining activity. The school has 219 students in grades seven thru nine. The Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works built the original school in 1936. Soon the original portion of the building was too small for the number of students. Also, all of the physical education classes were being held at the Helper Auditorium. Students had to race down the steps to beat their teachers there. In 1952, an addition was put on the school that included a gym, band room and cafeteria. The building was remodeled in 1973 and again in 2002. Helper Junior High's self-study report was an evaluation of the school's role in the community and programs offered by the school. The study included a wide range of data.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of their profile?*

The Visiting Team was very impressed with the evaluative honesty shown in this profile. The NSSE rubrics were used, and the faculty placed themselves where they felt they belonged. They were brutally honest in their assessment. Helper Junior High has great strength in its physical school environment. Students love their school and their teachers. There are many activities to promote student involvement, in and out of school. The overall test scores are low and need to be the school's main focus; this was obvious in the profile. Although this faculty has not worked together closely in the past, it is evident that this process is beginning.

b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

The Visiting Team felt that the profile should include overall school goals. These were missing from the profile. Although the departmental goals were of quality and substance, the school goals need to be in place, with specific action plans for future improvement. This faculty is in the beginning stages of working collaboratively, but is seeing some very positive buy-in from faculty members who have never worked together toward common school goals. The school is working with the district to provide them with more data for evaluation and planning purposes.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Have school goals in place and align the action plans with them.
- No language arts scores were included. Disaggregate them and use them for future improvement.
- Continue to work with community members. Include them more in-depth in school planning.
- Don't overlook the positive programs in the school.
- Evaluate whether all staff concerns have been included in the profile.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

The Visiting Team was somewhat concerned when interviews were conducted with community members. Although the parents felt they were listened to, they felt nothing they said was taken seriously. When speaking with administration, there were fewer concerns because of evidence of a plan in place to address these issues. Parents were encouraged to be assertive in their efforts to be involved and heard.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

This faculty was brutally honest in their assessment of themselves. They were very willing to take a good honest look at themselves. They voiced their concerns that this was difficult for their faculty, but that they prevailed and were convinced they had grown professionally from the process. The Visiting Team felt that they understated their many positive and impressive programs. The school climate and positive student attitudes were impressive.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Helper Jr. High School identified four goal areas for students, which they have deemed most in need of improvement. Each goal area defines desired results for student learning (DRSLs). The four goal areas are:

1. Complex thinking (a weakness shown in SAT scores)
2. Lifelong learning (a weakness shown by an opinion survey)
3. Respect (a weakness shown by an opinion survey)
4. Student pride (a lack of ownership by students shown by an opinion survey)

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

The Visiting Team found ample evidence that this process was done using the efforts of all the stakeholders of Helper Junior High to develop their mission statement. This was a lengthy process, with students, parents, staff, and community members involved for the complete two years. Mission statement posters in almost all areas of the school, including classrooms, evidence this. Students demonstrated knowledge of the mission statement and its contents by being willing to share with the Visiting Team that they knew it.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

The belief statements align well with the mission statement. Helper Junior High established general belief statements that not only align with their mission statement but also are also indicative of good teaching and learning practices. This allows both staff and students to internalize and demonstrate ownership.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

There is ample evidence that Helper Junior High has worked diligently and collaboratively to develop the mission statement, belief statements, and DRSLs. All three align with each other in an exceptional way. It is evident that the administration, faculty, staff, and students are aware of, and are making an effort to internalize and implement, this part of the accreditation process.

Curriculum Development:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure that the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

All departments base curricula on the Utah State Core Curriculum, supported by approved texts and other materials. The exception would be the Library Media/Information Core Curriculum, which is not being taught. Texts are rotated approximately every five years.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

There has been an effort in all departments to focus curricula on the school's desired results for student learning; however, the only Utah Life Skills specifically mentioned in the profile are complex thinking, lifelong learning, and responsible citizenship.

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

The professional staff is to be commended for their excellent variety of teaching methods. Observed in classrooms were math manipulatives, group projects, individual projects, varied physical activities, field trips, labs, classroom discussions, and more. However, the addition of a science lab would benefit the students' learning experience in this subject.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

In addition to the strategies listed above, each classroom has a computer, overhead projectors, and televisions. The variety of instructional strategies used meets the needs of different learners.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

Many efforts are made to provide such additional opportunities, including the Six-Pack program, Zero Hour, detention, after-school tutoring, field trips, etc. The school is willing to look at other recommended opportunities to support student learning. They are researching other ways to obtain data for this purpose.

Quality Assessment Systems:

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or schoolwide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Each teacher has developed periodic assessments to determine mastery of course concepts, based on the Utah State Core Curriculum and outlined in each departmental analysis. The English Department's expectations are unclear in the profile; however, in the classroom, expectations and assessments are well defined. In addition SATs and CRTs are given yearly.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

In each classroom, teachers have developed assessments to determine student performance for every concept discussed in the course material.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

Classroom assessments are designed to be fair to all students. ACT and CRT assessments are standardized tests that do not take into consideration ESL, special education, or other students with learning disabilities that are not covered under special education guidelines or considerate of students with varied ethnic backgrounds.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

Principal Montoya has demonstrated that he is aware of the academic concerns and needs of this school, has attended workshops, and has looked for resources to help his staff implement strategies that promote quality instruction. This includes an intensive look at Marzano's book *Practices that Work in the Classroom*. Mr. Montoya is supportive and encourages his staff to attend inservices, workshops, and other training.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision-making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

When Mr. Montoya was assigned to Helper Junior High, there were specific issues that he was asked to resolve. In doing so, he had to make some difficult decisions, which have resulted in many positive changes. Because of the nature of the decisions, not all staff members were involved in the decision-making process. This resulted in some sensitive feelings and some concern. Through the

accreditation process, doors have been opened for more site-based decision-making. Most teachers feel confident, at this point, that the decision-making process developed by the accreditation process will continue.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

Using the resources, funding, and programs available, Mr. Montoya and his staff are taking a hard look at student achievement. The school has begun to use SAT data early in the school year to drive teaching practices and instruction.

Understanding that the leadership of a school is not just the principal, Helper Junior High and its departments are making a conscious effort to monitor student progress and to inform parents of that progress through failing notices every two weeks, parent-teacher conferences, and classroom assessments.

The Visiting Team recommends that the school look at other assessment systems, besides standardized testing, that would help monitor student achievement.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

The leadership of Helper Junior High provides skillful stewardship of the school. The principal is dedicated to the school and its beliefs. The school's climate and culture have improved over the period of time that Mr. Montoya has been principal. Schoolwide policies and operational procedures are consistent with the school's mission and beliefs. All are designed for student learning and positive self-esteem.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

Understanding the limitations of funding and resources available for Helper Junior High, the Visiting Team recognizes that the leadership of this school works hard to allocate funds in the best interest of the students.

The Visiting Team recommends that, with regard to school funding, Helper Junior High look closely at allocating funds that align with overall school goals (which still need to be developed) and the DRSLs. This should be done through the School Community Council.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

Prior to the accreditation process, the stakeholders of the school did not feel empowered by the school leadership to collaborate and share responsibility for student learning. There was limited participation in decisions that were made regarding the school. Since the accreditation process, however, the school has moved toward a more cohesive decision-making process. The Visiting Team feels that there is a greater amount of commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning as a result of this process.

The Visiting Team commends Helper Junior High in its efforts to create and use the Community Council as a contributor to school decision-making, and recommends that site-based management continue.

Community Building:

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

The Visiting Team was impressed with the sense of community and the positive feelings among the students, staff, and parents. Helper Junior High School has numerous community partners. For example, the school works closely with Utah Power and Light, the DARE program, Harmony House, the College of Eastern Utah, Castle Valley Center, Carbon Credit Union, the Active Re-Entry program, the Helper City Council, and the Helper Christmas Light Parade. Additionally, the school receives support from the Carbon Country Club golf course, Helper Bowling alley, Price theaters, and Desert Wave Swimming Pool for incentive activities. Community volunteers teach and lecture in various classrooms and help coach several sports. The P.E. teacher collaborates with Emery High School in the social dance program. The community supports school programs through various fundraisers during the year. The community uses school facilities for Jr. Jazz, community shoot-around, and Little League Football. The Visiting Team was also impressed with the annual service projects for the community conducted by each grade level. The school creates a learning environment for the students which nurtures a feeling of caring and belonging.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

Evidence that the school extends the school community was apparent to the Visiting Team through such activities and programs as SEOPs, a quarterly school newsletter produced by the Language Arts Department, PTO deficiency notices sent every two weeks, Student Information System (SIS) Internet access for progress reports, and a school web page.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

It is the observation of the Visiting Team that, where funding permits, various workshops and training sessions are available to teachers. Recently, the principal and several staff members attended a training session by Robert Marzano that dealt with practices that work in the classroom. They returned and shared materials with the rest of the faculty and held a schoolwide inservice to implement what they learned. These inservices are ongoing. Individual teachers are also encouraged to attend training in their subject areas. Carbon School District provides opportunities for professional development programs, such as the recent math manipulatives training.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The Visiting Team was impressed by the dedication of the staff and their willingness to promote productive change as they met weekly to work on the accreditation process. They met religiously over a two-year period, with nearly all faculty members in attendance each time. They have gone the extra mile concerning the amount of time expended on this self-study.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (NASCU) STANDARDS I-X

Junior high schools are not accredited by the NASCU, and thus the NASCU standards are not applicable.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the schoolwide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

There is great strength in the honesty of the self-study. This faculty knows exactly where their areas of strength and weakness are, and they used the NSSE rubrics with precision. The action plans are manageable for the departmental goals in place. The weakness is in the lack of overall school goals with action plans.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and systemwide?*

This is a faculty that has not worked collaboratively in the past. The faculty members found it difficult to start this process. They worked diligently to get past barriers, and the process is well on its way. There is sufficient commitment to make this an ongoing process. There is also strong leadership to direct this effort.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the schoolwide action plan appear to be?*

The school administration understands that in order to have success they must first have schoolwide goals in place. They will continue in their efforts to have an action plan in place to accomplish this.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team recognizes the months of effort required from Helper Junior High to complete the self-study. They have done a commendable job with the mission and belief statements, DRSLS, and departmental analyses and goals. It was evident throughout the Team's visit that Helper Junior High has direction and a plan for improvement.
- The Visiting Team was very impressed with the nurturing, caring environment. It is very evident that students enjoy being at school and that teachers and administrators like the students. Students feel safe. The Visiting Team recognizes that this is an ongoing process that has developed over time and continues to be a priority. Students and parents trust the school staff and recognize that they care.
- Positive reward and incentive programs recognize student achievement. It is evident that the staff works hard to acquire the resources to fund programs that provide such positive reinforcement for students.
- A credible effort is being made, through Zero Hour and other tutoring programs, to meet the needs of struggling students.
- The improvements and overall condition of the physical plant show a great deal of pride by all the stakeholders.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team strongly recommends that an addition be made to the self-study. This should include articulating one to three manageable schoolwide goals and an action plan to reach them. The process for coming up with the goals and action plan should be accomplished using the same process as the self-study (i.e., as a school stakeholder effort). Possibilities for school goals mentioned by the Helper Junior High stakeholders to the Visiting Team include:
 - Raising SAT/CRT scores in specific content areas.
 - A character education program.
 - An accountability program for failing grades for 7th and 8th graders.
- The Visiting Team strongly recommends that the school and/or district explore possibilities to reinstate the art and shop programs to offer elective choices and enhance the vocational and art opportunities.
- It is the recommendation of the Visiting Team that the faculty and staff continue efforts to implement a collaboration process and integrate curricula, where possible, across subject areas; this will lead to continued school improvement.